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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6474
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 000922

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2023
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SUBJECT: SADR ENRAGED BY PM'S APPEAL TO IRAN

Classified By: Pol Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) In a brief pull-aside with Sadirst CoR member Baha al-Araji this morning, Baha said that he had personally advised PM Maliki several days ago not to travel to Basra. "I knew about his trip, even though it was supposed to be a secret." Al-Araji told the PM that no matter how long his

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visit to Basrah, he (Maliki) would inevitably have to return to Baghdad and would not have resolved all of Basrah's problems. He predicted that further chaos would ensue, as Basrah residents would conclude that if even their commander-in-chief could not restore order, then there was truly no functioning order in the city.

12. (S) Al-Araji added that he is in phone contact with Muqtada al-Sadr, who he insisted has not lost control over the Sadrist movement. Al-Araji attributed the IDF attacks on the Green Zone to JAM Special Groups, which he likened to uneducated, emotional children (who, he conceded, happen to be armed by Iran and looking for a reason to fight). In contrast, he said that the forces fighting in Basrah were mainstream JAM. He compared Muqtada to a father trying to get several unruly children to behave. Al-Araji said that he personally remains open to any dialogue with the GOI aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis, but seemed skeptical that Maliki would agree to dialogue at the moment. Baha noted that Muqtada al-Sadr was furious when he learned that PM Maliki had spoken to the Iranians asking them to pressure Muqtada to cool things down. "We should solve our problems without foreign interference," Muqtada told Al-Araji. Al-Araji agreed to remain in contact with the Embassy and acknowledged that the U.S. and most Iraqis share a similar interest in ensuring Iraq's stability.
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